

Tennis, Anyone?

By Barbara Del Piano

A tennis team at the Outrigger? At a Club without courts? Yes indeed!

Tennis was once a very popular sport at the Club. In fact, many of the Island's best players were members. Although the sport was popular among members, the idea of an official Outrigger team didn't come under serious consideration until after the Club had relocated and settled at its new Diamond Head site in 1964.

Although there were still no courts on the premises, there were public courts just across the park and two courts could be reserved for private events. So after talking about it for quite some time, a committee was finally formed, consisting of Dean Brinkman, Leith Anderson, George Peebles, Gertrude Berger and headed by Fred Buck.

The teams consisted of singles and doubles with several of the doubles teams consisting of married couples such as Gertrude and Harry Berger, and May and Peter Balding.

To enter a tournament, an entry fee of \$1 was charged, payable at the Front Desk. Bill Brooks designed an attractive Koa tennis "ladder" which listed all the players, one on top of the other. Players were encouraged to challenge one another and if the player lower down on the list beat the one on top, their names were switched.

There were separate ladders for singles and doubles. The ladders were displayed on the wall next to the Beach Shop (now the Logo Shop) and really brought out the competitive spirit in the players.

It was not until February, 1968, that the first Outrigger tournament was held. Handsome trophies had been acquired and the games were a great success. Winners of the men's doubles were Jim Beardmore and Gulab Watumull who defeated Leith Anderson and Harry Berger.

Winners of the women's doubles were Billie Baird and Sinclair Guard; second place went to Gertrude Berger and Shawn Washington. The tournament was followed by a luncheon at the Club when the trophies were awarded. The team was off to a great start and the players looked forward to a productive season.

The following month the Outrigger Tennis Singles Championships took place at the Kapiolani Park Courts with Peter Balding, Committee Chair, in charge of scheduling and planning. In the finals, Gulab Watumull got off to a great start but was finally defeated by Leith Anderson who took the men's trophy after a close and exciting match; first place among the women in the finals was won by Stephanie Berger after another breath-taking match in which she defeated Mary Jane Levine.

The sport continued to attract players and more and more members signed up, traipsing across the park, rackets in hand, to play on the Park's courts. Soon the Beach Shop was selling Wilson tennis balls for \$2 per can and OCC monogrammed tennis shirts, shorts and jackets were on the shelves, but moving quickly.

The committee worked hard, enticing new team players and holding tournaments. Mixed doubles were added to the schedule. In 1972 Outrigger took on opposing teams from the Punahou and Iolani tennis clubs.

Waialae Country Club sponsored a tournament at their courts which included singles, doubles and mixed doubles for men and women. Marilyn Haine did an incredible job that day. Not only did she win the women's doubles with Sinclair Guard, but after that match she dashed to Ala Moana where

she and Barbara Linn entered and won the Hawaiian Open. Coming back to Waialae, Marilyn then teamed with John Goss to win the mixed doubles. The tournament lasted from 8 a.m. until dark.

By the early 1970's Outrigger's tennis players had reached 150 participants and were playing against not only Punahou, Iolani and Waialae Country Club but Hawaii Kai Tennis Club and Kailua Racquet Club as well. Along with many in-house tournaments there was an extremely busy schedule and tennis was considered a major sport at the Outrigger.

Early in 1973 an Outrigger tennis clinic was held at the Hawaii Kai Recreation Center featuring beginning classes. The ten-week sessions, held on Saturday mornings, cost \$4 per hour for adults and \$3 for children with classes limited to eight students.

Another big step for Outrigger teams was entering Honolulu's B-C League Tourney, with women competing against men in both singles and doubles. Team captains were Don Moore, Ann Burke, John Moore and Dave Pierson.

The sport continued its popularity through the 1970s. One day at the Koko Head courts, Club players participated in more than 90 games. In addition to classes, practice sessions and tournaments, there were also tennis parties held at the Club. Delicious dinners served at sunset as well as entertainment and fashion shows contributed to a special evening.

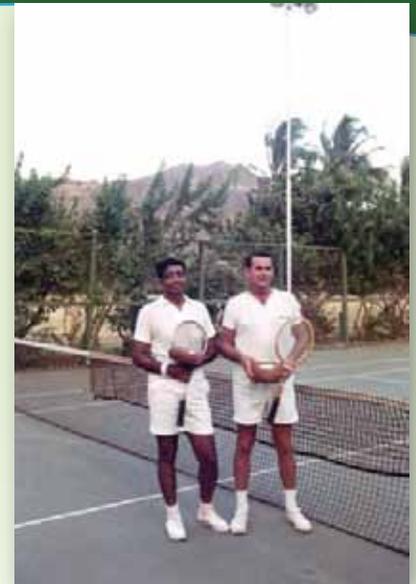
The Tennis Committee changed periodically, with Jon Haig and Phil Whitney co-chairing for several years. In 1974, 20 people expressed interest in serving on the committee. Taking over the positions of co-captains were Dede Openshaw and John Michalski.

Among the activities added to the busy schedule was an umpire's class taught at the Kailua Racquet Club. Among the new opponents Outrigger faced, were teams from the Honolulu Interservice Tennis Association which consisted of teams from military bases on Oahu including Hickam, Pearl Harbor and Fort Shafter.

In the fall of 1974, a ruling from the Parks Department denying private clubs use of city-owned tennis courts seriously affected the Club's tennis program. As Outrigger was the only team that did not have its own courts, the ruling posed a major problem for OCC tennis.

There was talk of building another deck over the parking garage where tennis courts could be built but although the idea persisted for quite some time, it was finally abandoned and the Club was hard-put finding places to hold their tournaments. Courts were offered in Kailua, but there was quite a difference from a hop-skip-and-a-jump across the park to a trip over the Pali.

Although tennis persisted into the 1990s with play in the Honolulu Tennis League, it just wasn't the same and eventually, it became a thing of the past. Aloha Outrigger tennis.



Gulab Watumull and Leith Anderson battled for Club singles title.